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Interview Assignment

Completing this interview assignment has proven to be an extremely rewarding and helpful experience. Currently, my major is math education, but I am most likely going to be switching to education with a concentration in science. As soon as I found out about interviewing a professor in my major, I couldn’t think of anyone better to ask than my mom. As a biology professor at Cedar Crest College, my mom has a strong background in science and teaching. Through talking with her, I learned of the writing that is involved in teaching on a daily basis, the purpose of her writing, who she addresses her writing towards, what she gets out of her writing, and writing styles that she admires. Since I, too, will be teaching science one day, interviewing my mom was an awesome opportunity to see the amount of writing that is incorporated into this major.

With a Masters Degree and Ph.D. in molecular biology from Lehigh University, my mom has worked on many different types of writing. She said that in the sciences, research money is needed, so it’s important to be a good writer for grant proposals to get someone to fund your research. Also, if this research is publishable, a scientific paper with a thesis, abstract, introduction, materials, methods, results, discussion, and conclusion must be presented. Before talking to her, I never realized the amount of writing that is needed in the science field.

On an average day as a teacher, my mom spends much time writing lesson plans, preparing her syllabus, and organizing power point slides with main ideas. She also wrote a 254-page lab manual that is used for her lab course. This manual includes all of the exercises in order, introductions, step-by-step procedures, a results section, and thought questions at the end. She spent much time on this, and it helps to minimize the amount of handouts given in class and to help better organize the students. Recently, my mom has also designed her course to offer it online. She spent many hours each day writing quizzes, tests, weekly schedules, power points, homework assignments, and a discussion board. In addition to the amount of writing used inside the classroom, writing is also used to respond to student’s emails, to provide feedback on graded papers, and to answer questions on the discussion board. Writing is used very often on a daily basis as a teacher.

When asked what her main purpose was for writing as a teacher, my mom said for clarity of the material. She believes that when given too little or too much information, students tend to shut down and dislike a class. Therefore, she writes to display the information in an organized and concise format so that it is understandable. This way, students will enjoy learning the material and not become frustrated. My mom also mentioned that she writes for better communication and interaction between her and her students. As a future teacher, I realize the effect that good writing skills can have on my students. I will definitely work to make my information clear, and to communicate often with my students to get to know them both in class and also on a more personal level.

The audience that my mom writes for is mainly her students. She designs her writing to deliver the course materials to her students as perfectly as possible. In addition to her students, she also writes for other professors who use her lab manual for their classes. Her writing between her students and other professors, however, doesn’t vary too much. In both cases, she is professional and respectful. When I talked with my mom about her different audiences, I realized the different audiences that I will be writing for when I am a teacher. I will need to write for my students, other teachers, and my students’ parents. Each form of writing will need to be adjusted for each of my audiences. For my students, my writing will be fun and interesting. For the other teachers and parents, it will need to be much more formal. I understand the importance of appropriately addressing each audience through writing and how often it will need to be done.

As a teacher, my mom said that she gets fulfillment and happiness in the writing that she does because she puts in a lot of time to make sure that her writing is effective. She loves to get feedback from her students, positive or negative, so that she knows what changes to make, if any. In my future career, I know that the key to being a good teacher is to be open to changes. Based on how my students learn material or enjoy a lesson, I will constantly be making revisions. In addition, my mom indicates her love of science and makes it known to her students through her writing. I believe that every teacher should express their passion for a subject with the goal of getting their students to enjoy it as well.

My mom couldn’t name a favorite research article, but she did mention that she loved to read review articles written by Harold zur Hausen from the German Cancer Research Center. He described the link between viruses and cancer, which she found to be interesting, engaging, and complete. Since she did not have a favorite research article, I chose an article that will help me as a future teacher. This article is called “Engaging Middle-Grade Students to Learn in a Caring Community”. After reading it, it explains the different needs and learning styles of middle grade students. Through my style of writing, I will need to accommodate each student’s needs and ways of learning for their benefit.

Through this interview with my mom, I recognize how important writing is in any classroom, no matter the subject. I learned to appreciate the need for writing and how often it is used in everyday life, especially as a teacher. As my mom told me the kinds of writing she does, who she writes for, and what she gets out of writing, I learned of many new ideas and strategies for appealing to my students in the future. My mom is definitely my role model in life because she is a very intelligent, caring, and driven person. I look forward to becoming a science teacher like her one-day and definitely using writing skills in all aspects of my job as an educator.